

**Ealing CCG – improving primary care for people experiencing homelessness**

**Background**

Ealing CCG has a stated commitment to improving access to primary care for all Ealing residents, with an existing programme of improving access to appointments.

Ealing CCG has also initiated a Homeless ‘Out of Hospital’ contract within primary care to incentivise GP practices to register patients who are currently experiencing homeless, and ensure they receive appropriate holistic healthcare, comprehensive screening, and appropriate vaccination. GP practices receive an enhanced per capita amount for homeless patients that they meet the contract requirements for.

The Ealing Primary Care Workforce Lead approached Pathway to deliver initially one, but later a further three half-day trainings in order to support GP practices taking on the Homeless ‘Out of Hospital’ contract. These took place between 2017 and 2019.

**Training**

Training was delivered primarily by Samantha Dorney-Smith (Nursing Fellow, Pathway) and Dr Nigel Hewett (Medical Director, Pathway) alongside Experts by Experience (Stan Burridge and Moe Elmi) and local providers (see below for a list). The last session included input from the Doctors of the World ‘Safe Surgeries’ programme.

The training lasts three hours and includes:

* clarification of GP registration responsibilities
* overview of homelessness situation in Ealing
* clinical update relevant to the outcomes on the contract
* basic training on housing, and immigration law
* advice on how to write an effective ‘priority need’ letter
* key national policy points
* signposting to relevant clinical networks, and further training
* case study of denial of access to care from an Expert by Experience
* short presentations from key local services
* open discussion with all presenters at the end

Local services that have presented include:

* Ealing Street Outreach - St Mungos – Elizabeth Ursell and Michelle Da Silva
* Housing and Support Service – London Borough of Ealing – Paul Temple
* Acton Homelessness Concern – Ian Breen
* Ealing RISE Drug and Alcohol Service within Ealing hospital – Bernie Myers
* Greenlight Medical Van – Laura Beveridge

Groundswell also presented at several sessions about the role of peer advocacy in supporting patients, although Ealing CCG does not currently commission this service.

All direct attendees to the training received:

* Certificate of attendance
* Summary leaflet of all local services prepared by Ealing Street Outreach
* All presentations
* Contact details of presenters for follow up

Attendees were asked to take back what they had learned to their practices.

The leaflet and presentations were also made available on the Ealing CCG intranet for anyone to access (regardless of whether they had attended the training or not).

**Attendees**

Attendees included a mix of GPs, practice nurses, health care assistants, GP receptionists and practice managers. 92 staff were directly trained across the 4 sessions. Generally, the mix of clinicians to support staff was about 50:50. Training was deliberately designed to be suitable for this interdisciplinary context.

**Reflections from presenters**

All presenters thought this programme represented excellent practice, and demonstrated a real commitment from Ealing CCG to improve care.

There was good dialogue between the presenters and attendees in all the sessions, and this enabled many myths about homelessness generally and rights to GP registration in particular to be addressed. It was felt by the presenters that there was palpable positive change to the level of concerns expressed about registering and managing homeless patients over the four sessions – by the fourth session attendees were much less concerned by the challenges, and very engaged with ways to remove barriers to better care.

Sessions also provided a forum for community services to build direct relationships with GP surgeries, as well as for the community services to understand the challenges faced by the surgeries e.g. specific ways for community services to support clients to register and attend at specific surgeries were discussed.

There was also a real feeling from the community providers that they were being enabled to be part of working towards better access to health care, and improved care generally, and that the sessions themselves had generated changes.

*‘I do think things have got better over the last two years.* [regarding GP registration] *I don’t know whether it’s to do with these sessions or not, but I’m sure they have contributed. Things have definitely got better’*

– Michelle, Ealing Street Outreach

There was also interest from many attendees in more strategic issues relating to homeless healthcare e.g. coding of homelessness in health data sets. Discussions on these kinds of topics was very encouraging, coming from a non-specialist audience.

**Feedback from attendees**

Feedback has been universally good. Not only were the average scores good, comments on what had been learned (see below) made it clear that the key points had been absorbed:

***‘What have you learned?’***

Example feedback from receptionists and practice managers regarding this question included:

*‘There was always a grey area when registering patients, and now it’s more clear’*

*‘I will update the info on our website to make sure it is accurate regarding ID and registration’*

*‘Not to not refuse registration to homeless patients’*

*‘Not to say no to any patient’*

*‘Homeless patients need to be seen in 24 hours when they register’*

Feedback from GPs on what they had learned included:

*‘I will think about vulnerability, and emphasising the ‘more vulnerable than a normal person’ angle in letters’*

*‘intentionality and priority need’*

*‘I will implement the Safe Surgeries toolkit and display the posters etc – I didn’t know about this before’*

*‘I will use the ‘Personality disorder – Meeting the Challenge, Making a Difference’ guidance’*

*‘We already knew about the registration guidance, but I will make sure we will discuss this again at a practice meeting’*

***Meeting local providers and Experts by Experience***

Lots of attendees particularly enjoyed meeting the local providers and Experts by Experience, and the panel element of the afternoon obviously helped to spark interest in taking things forward:

*‘All the links today were helpful. I definitely want to follow up and find out what is out there’*

*‘The St Mungos outreach leaflet is good – I will take it to the next practice meeting’*

*‘The panel were fantastic. I didn’t realise there was so much out there we can access’*

*‘I liked the ‘meet the providers’. I liked the idea of the panel and being able to ask questions’*

*‘I particularly enjoyed hearing from Gerry* [from Groundswell] *and Stan… I would like further advise on how to help homeless / recently homeless people move forward with their lives’*

***Key aspects of training***

Content that was mentioned multiple times as being useful by all participants included:

* information about Streetlink (the website for referring rough sleepers to street outreach nationally)
* the homeless service leaflet
* clarity on aspects of the Homeless contract
* clarity on GP registration rules
* information on housing law
* meeting local services

***Overall relevance to practice and dissemination potential***

Most people acknowledged the training to be directly relevant to current practice and several attendees directly referenced disseminating learning.

*‘Today’s training has been enlightening and informative and I will take back what I have learned to my practice’.*

*‘I found the training to be very informative. I felt that I have learnt many things that I can take back to my surgery.’*

*‘Excellent, thorough, I think you covered everything I wanted to be clear about’*

51 feedback forms were obtained in total. 24 feedback forms did not have an option to score the event (these were all from the first training), however the later 27 did. Of 27 feedback forms for ‘overall rating’ 16 scored the event as 5 (excellent), 9 as a 4 (good), and 2 as a 3 (ok).

The only criticisms were about the amount of information packed in (too much), and some occasional IT and sound issues.

**Summary**

This project has tested the concept of providing a simple training to all GP practice staff regarding people experiencing homelessness with the purpose of improving care.

Initial feedback is extremely positive on the side of both the trainers and service providers. All attendees were able to articulate something tangible they had learnt that would change their practice. Local service providers feel there has been an improvement in access to care for homeless people locally whilst the programme has been running.

These tangible benefits have been achieved at very low cost. The success of this simple project will be profiled with policy makers.

**Thanks to all the local providers who took part:**

* Elizabeth Ursell, Manager and Michelle Da Silva, Housing Progression Worker – St Mungos, Ealing Street Outreach
* Paul Temple, Housing and Support Brokerage Officer – London Borough of Ealing
* Ian Breen, Manager - Acton Homelessness Concern
* **Bernie Myers, Addictions Care & Liaison Nurse Specialist Team Lead -** Ealing Hospital RISE
* Laura Beveridge, Clinical Lead, Greenlight Medical Van
* Gerry Rolfe, Case Worker - Groundswell

**Further information**

For more information and or/advice about introducing similar training into your area please contact: Samantha Dorney-Smith, Nursing Fellow, Pathway

[samantha.dorney-smith@nhs.net](mailto:samantha.dorney-smith@nhs.net)

07957 552057

For information specifically about the Doctors of the World ‘Safe Surgeries’ programme: contact: Jennie Corbett, UK Policy and Advocacy Officer, Doctors of the World

[JCorbett@doctorsoftheworld.org.uk](mailto:JCorbett@doctorsoftheworld.org.uk)

Dates of session and number of participants:

* 22nd February 2017 – 34 participants
* 26th September 2018 – 23 participants
* 6th February 2019 – 21 participants
* 3rd July 2019 – 14 participants